

Lesson Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

Lesson ID: 92559-34265

Title: ECONOMIC PATROLS

Operation/Exercise Name: MARFOR PROMOTE LIBERTY Observed: 13 Jun 1990

Originator: COMMARFOR PANAMA

POC: LTCOL FAWCETT Commercial: (919)451-2620 DSN: 4842620

5. (U) OBSERVATION:

Observation of local commerce and trade is was a valuable source of intelligence in Panama.

6. (U) DISCUSSION:

During one operation to western Panama, a company sized element of the force was billeted in a private school which was closed for vacation. The reconnaissance patrol effort was focused on the hills outside of town where we believed there were arms caches and armed men. The town itself was quiet. The mayor said the people would enjoy seeing the Marines in town, but it was not appropriate to run patrols. We therefor conducted what we called economic patrols. Groups of four to six men were allowed to visit the small markets and cafes within a few blocks of our billet. They were to travel on foot, moving casually, but alert. On entering any store or snack bar, at least one man was posted on watch outside. The intent was to appear casual, not alarm the people, but clearly alert to dissuade any random drive by attack. Throughout all economic patrols weapons were kept in Condition 3 (magazine in the weapon, no round in the chamber) and in hand, slung, or within arms reach. This was apparently acceptable in this rural town. The people were glad to see us, the merchants glad to see our money, and the Marines happy for some variety to their MRE diet. These patrols at times led to reports from people we met on arms caches and other activity. These "economic patrols" proved to be beneficial to all concerned, but strict guidelines must be established and care must always be taken to ensure that Marines don't become an easy target.

7. (U) LESSON LEARNED:

Observation of local commerce and trade is was a valuable source of intelligence.

8. (U) RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That these economic patrols be used
in low intensity conflicts (LIC) to gather intelligence.

9. (U) COMMENTS:

None stated.

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